



# STATE OF IOWA WORKFORCE PLANNING

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## Succession Planning

*A How-to Guide for Developing a Succession Plan*

Prepared by the Department of Management and  
Department of Administrative Services

FY 2010

## **Succession Planning – What it is and isn't**

Succession planning is a process whereby organizations ensure that employees are recruited and/or developed to fill each key role within the organization.

The objective of succession planning is to ensure that the organization (or a unit of the organization) continues to operate effectively when individuals occupying critical positions depart. A succession plan may not include all existing managerial positions and may include positions that are not supervisory or managerial but instead utilize unique, hard-to-replace competencies. (For more information about competencies, see the resources listed at the end of this document.)

Succession planning is part of workforce planning. Its focus is on assuring that appropriate bench strength is in place for replacing critical positions.

What is “bench strength”? In essence, bench strength is an assessment of the organization's preparedness to replace departing staff in critical positions. Primarily, this refers to having other staff on board who are ready to step into someone else's shoes at the appropriate time under the appropriate circumstances with a virtually seamless transition.

Succession planning is not a technique to plan individual career advancement opportunities or a reward for high performers.

Finally, succession planning is strategic, both in the investment of resources devoted to it and in the kinds of talent it focuses on. It is not a one time event; rather, it is re-assessed and revised annually through the workforce planning process.

## **Succession Planning in the Public Sector**

Most public jurisdictions operate under some type of merit system whereby applicants and employees are selected for positions based on their qualifications for the job. Equity and fairness are underlying themes of merit systems; therefore, there should be no showing of having determined who will succeed any given person until such time as all qualified candidates are provided an equal opportunity to apply for and be considered for the job.

That doesn't mean, though, that selection decisions can't be made well in advance of the incumbent's departure IF the incumbent has given official notice of the intent to leave, IF there is either a vacant position into which the successor can be promoted or an overlap situation has been approved by DAS-HRE and IF the selection process is handled appropriately.

In the State of Iowa, where there are three state employee unions, not all vacancies are filled through a competitive process. There is a negotiated, specific order in which positions covered by collective bargaining contracts are filled through transfer provisions. Persons in the same job class in the same organizational unit with the most seniority may transfer to the position before any other approach to filling the position may be considered, including promotion.

Succession planning typically involves management and supervisory positions. Neither type of position is covered by collective bargaining contracts in the State of Iowa, so the transfer provisions described above would not apply. However, the other types of critical positions - specialized knowledge, hard-to-fill and other key positions within the organization may likely be covered by collective bargaining contracts. Succession planning for these positions must take potential transfers into account.

*\*For additional information on succession planning, please go to the State of Iowa, DAS-HRE succession planning web page at:*  
[http://das.hre.iowa.gov/wp\\_succession\\_planning.html](http://das.hre.iowa.gov/wp_succession_planning.html)

## **Succession Planning Process**

There are four phases to the State of Iowa's succession planning process:

- Phase 1: Identify Key/Critical Positions
- Phase 2: Conduct Position Analysis
- Phase 3: Develop Succession Plan
- Phase 4: Monitor, Evaluate, Revise

### **Phase 1: Identify Key/Critical Positions**

A position is considered key or critical if:

- Organizational structure - The position is a key contributor in achieving the organization's mission
- Key task - The position performs a critical task that would stop or hinder vital functions from being performed if it were left vacant
- Specialized leadership – The position requires specialized or unique expertise (skill sets) that is difficult to replace
- Geographic – The position is the only one of its kind in a particular location and it would be difficult for a similar position in another location to carry out its functions
- Potential high turnover job classes – Positions in the same job class or occupational group in danger of “knowledge drain” due to retirements or high turnover

## **Phase 2: Conduct Position Analysis**

Once key/critical positions and high turnover classes have been identified, the next step is to identify the specific skill sets that will be needed by each of these positions through the identification of key competencies. These will serve as the framework in determining existing bench strength within the organization.

Questions asked at this step include:

- Why is this position key/critical?
- What are the external and internal factors affecting this position?
- How will the position be used in the future?
- What competencies or skill sets will be required?
- What is the current bench strength?
- What are the gaps (competencies or skill sets not possessed by the current staff)?
- What strategies will be used to address the gaps?

## **Phase 3: Develop Succession Plan**

The succession plan is the culmination of Phases 1 and 2. This is where the reviews of the individual positions and high turnover job classes are rolled into one document and gaps and strategies are formulated at an organizational or unit level. In this phase, the strategies to overcome the gaps are outlined to include target completion dates, responsible parties and required resources.

## **Phase 4: Monitor, Evaluate, Revise**

Ongoing evaluation and adjustments are vital to effective succession planning. Although the succession plan covers a 3-5 year period, it should be reviewed at least annually. If an agency does not regularly review its succession planning efforts, it runs the risk of failing to meet goals or not having the ability to rapidly respond to unanticipated changes. The succession plan template includes the section, Status/Progress Update. Enter comments in this section to reflect progress on each action item.

## **Submitting the Agency Succession Plan**

Each agency is required to submit its succession plan, as part of its workforce plan, to the Department of Administrative Services, Human Resources Enterprise and an electronic copy to the Department of Management by July 1, 2009. Your agency will be asked to annually review its plan and submit updated versions by July 1 each year. To submit, please attach completed Phase 1, 2 and 3 templates of the succession plan to the workforce plan.

Submit your agency Succession Plan with your Workforce Plan to:  
Department of Administrative Services, Attention: Nancy Berggren, Chief  
Operating Officer  
Hoover State Office Building  
Des Moines, IA 50319 or e-mail the document to:  
[Nancy.berggren@iowa.gov](mailto:Nancy.berggren@iowa.gov)  
Copy to: [Linda.leteo@iowa.gov](mailto:Linda.leteo@iowa.gov)

## **Resources**

- 1) Chapter Five of the Applicant Screening Manual, specifically the section on "Competencies"  
[http://das.hre.iowa.gov/documents/publications/applicant\\_screening\\_manual.pdf](http://das.hre.iowa.gov/documents/publications/applicant_screening_manual.pdf)
- 2) State of Iowa Competency Guide  
[http://das.hre.iowa.gov/documents/class\\_and\\_pay/competency\\_guide.doc](http://das.hre.iowa.gov/documents/class_and_pay/competency_guide.doc)
- 3) State of Iowa Competency Library  
[http://das.hre.iowa.gov/documents/class\\_and\\_pay/job\\_competencies.pdf](http://das.hre.iowa.gov/documents/class_and_pay/job_competencies.pdf)
- 4) Retirement Eligibility Report

If you have additional questions, please contact your DAS-HRE Personnel Officer or Mary Ann Hills at 281-6603 or [Maryann.hills@iowa.gov](mailto:Maryann.hills@iowa.gov).

# Phase 1: Key/Critical Positions

Division/unit	Job Class Title	Position # (optional - use only if distinction is helpful)	Supervisor	Retirement Eligibility Date	Reason why this is considered a key/critical position

## Reasons why a position may be considered key or critical:

- Organizational structure – The position is a key contributor in achieving the organization’s mission
- Key task – The position performs a critical task that would stop or hinder vital functions from being performed if it were left vacant
- Specialized leadership – Any position that requires specialized or unique expertise (skills sets) that is difficult to replace
- Geographic – The position is the only one of its kind in a particular location and it would be difficult for a similar position in another location to carry out its functions
- Potential high turnover job classes – Groups in danger of “knowledge drain” due to retirements or high turnover
- Other - explain

*Copy and paste additional pages as needed*

## Phase 2: Position\* Analysis

<b>Key/Critical Position or Job Class:</b>		<b>Position Title or Job Class:</b>	
<b>Reason why this position or job class is key/critical:</b>		<b>Retirement Eligibility Date (if applicable):</b>	
<b>External Factors:</b>	<b>Internal Factors:</b>		<b>How the position will be used in the future:</b>
<b>What competencies or skill sets will be required?</b>			
<b>Current bench strength:</b>			
<b>Gaps – competencies or skill sets not possessed by current staff:</b>			
<b>Strategies to address gaps:</b>			

\*This type of analysis can also be conducted for a group of like positions (job class, occupational group) where several positions in a group are considered critical due to pending retirements or high turnover.

*Copy and paste additional pages as needed*

# Phase 3: Succession Plan

Key/At-Risk Positions & Classes	Gaps	Strategies	Target Completion Date	Person(s) Responsible	Required Resources	Status/Progress Update